The Black Cat

MAY 1907

Itself
Edgar Mayhew Bacon

The Passing of Joe Mary
W. Hanson Durham

A Lost Bargain
Charles Poole Cleaves

Una—the Alone
Anne De Bonneville Scollard

Hanifa
Edgar J. Banks

The Lace Designers
Don Mark Lemon

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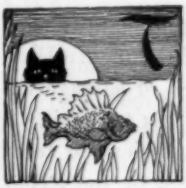
Itself.*

BY EDGAR MAYHEW BACON.



THE Missouri was in flood. To use a common financial phrase, there was a slump in real estate, and several thousand acres of well-connected, arable land had abandoned their ancient riparian rights and degenerated into mere yellow mud, which swept by Glascow and Booneville at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Between Arrow Rock and Lisbon the stream, that had spread out below the islands, tried to swing at racing speed into its narrowing channel, swirling against the curving bank with mad impetuosity, — tearing, grinding, and overflowing it.

When the wa" [illegible] soapy froth that marked the edge of the flood began to fill the [illegible]inlows and doorway of Mike Cassedy's house, the family thought it time to go. Their exodus was accompanied with loud bewailings, led by Jane Cassedy, the teamster's wife, while Ellen, Janey and Mamie Cassedy chimed in according to their ability. Gramma McCrea, a victim to rheumatism, hobbled out in tearful silence, devoutly crossing herself when the little band of homeless refugees reached the safer ground of the bluff. They were not alone in their flight. When they halted, the forlorn

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family found themselves in the midst of equally unfortunate neighbors, a circumstance which went far to mitigate the severity of their affliction.

Mrs. Toone was there, with her six children, each one redder-eyed than the others, and Mrs. O'Grady lamented in concert with Mrs. Donelly and the Widow Daly. The Kearnses, being a thrifty race, had already begun to build a shack to cover them, and the O'Brians, in view of their royal blood, actually aspired to nothing less than a two-roomed cabin, built from wreckage carried up from the shore.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, after rocking for some time upon its foundations, the Cassedy house floated off. It careened till it struck the only unshaken building in the neighborhood, the little stone church of St. Ann. The last the tearful family saw of their late home, it was being whirled away in fragments on the face of the waters.

Mike Cassedy had no idea of joining in the idle lamentations of the women, nor the aimless speculations of most of the men. Having saved his team and wagon, he pursued a work of salvage till twilight settled over land and flood, the result of his toil being a pile of lumber, motley in its variety, but quite sufficient to form a shelter that vied with the camp of the Kearnses, or the gypsy palace of the O'Brians.

When night covered the turgid waters of the Missouri, and the last keener on the bluff forgot her wailing in troubled sleep, a strange thing occurred on the sunken neck of land where the Cassedy house had stood. Mistress McCrea, being blessed with the faculty of dreaming true when important things were coming to pass, saw in her slumbers a brave, new house riding the flood. It stranded on the point, the lower angle of the front grinding first upon the submerged bar, and then, as it righted, gradually dragged more and more to the east, till at last it settled solidly within twenty paces of the spot where the old house had stood.

With the first peep of day Ellen, Tessie and Mamie were awake and out of doors. To the edge of the bluff they went, to discover what they could of novelty. In five minutes they were back, breathless with excitement, and pouring an astonishing tale into the credulous ears of the grandmother.

"A new house, bigger an' better'n ourn," explained Tessie.

"An' it's got paint on it!" supplemented the other sisters, shrilly exultant that this important item of news, the delivery of which would almost outweigh the glory of the first announcement, should have been omitted by the nimble-tongued Tessie.

Gramma showed no astonishment but, rising, took her cane without a word, and being already dressed, hobbled slowly to the point of observation, while her newly awakened daughter-in-law, still rubbing the sleep from her eyes, made frantic haste to put on such clothes as decency demanded before facing the gaze of early rising neighbors. Mike Cassedy, being stiff and sore from yesterday's exertions, was longer in getting his faculties in hand, poor man; but at last he, too, joined the little procession, and after all Gramma McCrea arrived last at the bluff.

"Did iver annywan see th' loike?" Mrs. Cassedy's voice was reduced almost to a whisper in the face of what she made no doubt was a miraculous dispensation of Providence.

"Yis, yis, 'tis jest as I saw it," Gramma repeated. "'Tis jest as I saw it last night in me drame."

"What's that yere sayin'?" asked Mrs. Cassedy.

"Gramma dramed it," whispered the children to each other, while Mike, who was seldom known to speak unless he had something of importance to say, and seldom then till the occasion was passed, turned his serious big face inquiringly toward the wise woman.

"Aye;" repeated Gramma. "'Deed I dramed it while ye were all slapin', not long from midnight. I saw it come down on the strame and shtrand thayer, where it is now, an' that I'll take oat' to."

It was not long before the refugee settlement on the bluff had learned that Mike Cassedy's family were favored of Heaven to the extent of having a better house in the place of the one they had lost, and to add to the excitement caused by this astonishing news, word was solemnly passed that Mistress McCrea had dramed it.

"She's a wonderful woman, that."

"Aye. She has the second sight."

"Seein' she dramed it, wouldn't the house belong to her, now?"

"Whisht. What differ does it make? Wouldn't she have a home anyhow? Mike Cassedy has been good to th' ould woman, an' whether she was in her own house or his, I warrant she'll never know any odds."

It was a nice point to raise, this question of ownership in a house that had come unincumbered by title-deed, lease, mortgage, or other document wherewith properties are wont to be trammeled, all the world over. Former proprietor there seemed to have been none. Advised by the good priest, Father Joseph, Cassedy sought diligently to discover whence the house had come; but although his inquiries extended for thirty miles up the river, and descriptions of the dwelling were inserted in several papers between Booneville and Lexington, no trace of an owner could be found.

So it came to pass that by the time the flood had entirely subsided and the mud which occupied the site of the Cassedys' garden had dried so that one could reach the new house by walking, the exiled family returned to an enlarged and improved domain, and respectful acquaintances were careful to speak of it as Mistress McCrea's house.

Blessed be little. Even in the haste of their exodus the Cassedys had been able to take with them the most sacred of their household gods, and as for furniture, they could afford to lose the few simple old pieces they had possessed, in view of the fact that the new dwelling contained twice as much, and that of a much better quality.

The building was not quite in the position desired, but with the aid of his team, and the willing assistance of his neighbors, Cassedy succeeded in jacking it about till he got it in the right place. When the family, amid the congratulations of their friends and to their own great satisfaction, took formal possession, and the careful Cassedy with his team drew back the heterogeneous lot of lumber that had sheltered them on the hill, and built with it a fence that was the envy of the neighborhood, people even began to whisper that the Cassedys were getting up in the world, and Father Joseph suggested that a thank-offering would be most suitably bestowed upon the parish of Saint Ann.

But how approach, or by what reference preface, the crowning discovery that filled to overflowing the cup of the delighted

Cassedys? The statement that the furniture of the new house doubled in extent and value that of the old one, is short of the whole truth. In one of the four bedrooms (no other house upon Fiddler's Neck had more than two) there was a heavy black walnut bedstead, with springs and mattress reasonably dry, in spite of the soaking that the lower floor of the house had sustained. The headboard of the bed was high and ornately decorated with ouldings, while the sides were of unusual thickness. It was altogether a massive piece of furniture, such as a rich man might own, but entirely above the ordinary aspirations of people like the Cassedys. In the very centre of the high headboard was a medallion or shield in high relief, and upon it, swinging from a small hook, hung a picture the like of which had never before been seen on Fiddler's Neck. A young woman, with auburn hair, blue eyes piously raised to Heaven, and delicate hands clasped in uninterrupted devotion, occupied a frame of Florentine gold, shaped to form a cross. It is no wonder that the awestruck family regarded this miniature and its setting with superstitious joy. To their simple minds it was at once the symbol and the flower of their new fortunes.

For days the returning neighbors were admitted to view the precious thing. With but one dissenting voice, they pronounced it the likeness of a saint, and when Father Joseph had added his approval to the general verdict, the matter was deemed to be settled beyond dispute. It was even whispered that Saint Ann herself had come to take the Cassedys under her special protection, and a halo of sanctity began to gather about the teamster's house. It cost him something, to be sure, as dignities and reputation are apt to cost. There could be no doubt that one so favored should do more for the church than could be expected from his less fortunate neighbors. Father Joseph was certainly just in advancing this view, and in fairness to Mike Cassedy it should be said that he entirely fell in with it, and labored early and late to support his new dignities. Business increased with him; in place of two horses, within the year he had six, and two strong, sober lads were employed as helpers; so that in time he became the most prosperous man in the community.

In the grand new bedroom, in the magnificent bed, under the

blessed picture, they put Gramma McCrea. An amiable dispute between the mother and daughter had been settled by the unusual utterance of a word from Mike.

"Y'r mother'll take that room, who else?" Who else, indeed. The whole family agreeing that it was her right, not only because she had "dramed it," but by reason of her advanced years, her rheumatic pains, and her greatly loved personality, the old woman was affectionately installed in the best chamber.

"'Deed, my dear," she said to her daughter, "Ye are all too good to th' useless ould 'ooman. I'd be better plazed if yerself and Mike, good, honest man, wud slape in it."

"Whist, an' don't be callin' yerself names," answered Mrs. Cassedy, bustling about in pretence of tidying the already immaculate premises. "What'd me an' Mike fale like, slapin' in the grand bed, an' you on straw. I'd take shame to do it. We're young yet, and our bones rest aisy wherever we are."

The first night that Gramma McCrea slept in the big bed she painfully climbed to her knees at the head of the mattress, and reaching up, touched the picture with thin, trembling fingers. Then she said her prayers and signed the cross, feeling safe and rich as she had never before felt in all her long, toil-filled life. Was not "Itself" watching over her?

The exposure at the time of the flood had greatly increased Gramma's rheumatism. When she first was established in the great bed, under the blessed protection of "Itself," she was nearly doubled with pain, and even her pious thanksgiving and petitions to Heaven were punctuated with groans and sighs. Now a miracle, or what bore strong external resemblance to one, gave the Cassedy family and their neighbors fresh occasion to marvel. The first twenty-four hours in the bed were marked by a decided improvement in Mistress McCrea's condition. At the end of the second day she arose, declaring that her pains had left her, and offered to help her daughter with the housework. After the third night — but this is a secret between Gramma and her youngest grandchild — she astonished Mamie by challenging her to a contest at rope-skipping, and the agility displayed by the rejuvenated old woman could only be equalled by the astonishment of the child, or by her own subsequent contrition. The details of Gramma's

recovery, the rope-skipping episode alone omitted, soon became public property. It may be that doubters would have arisen to question the truth of the story, had not Gramma been seen frequently without her cane, a living witness to the supernatural virtue of "Itself."

Janey Mack, lame from her birth, was living in the next house but one from the Cassedy home when these things occurred, and after many consultations her mother made bold to ask Gramma McCrea might Janey sleep one night in the great bed.

"Not wan night, but a wake if 'twill do her anny good," was the hearty reply. "I'll not be sayin' that 'Itself' will cure her, but 'twill be no harm to thry. I'm that young meself now that I cud slape on the flure and not be the worse."

Janey's uncle, the acknowledged skeptic of Fiddler's Point, made great sport of the "shuperstition of thim wimmin"; but when, at the end of a week, Janey walked out of the Cassedy's house without her crutches, he fairly turned tail and went up to Kansas City to look for a job that he heard was waiting for him there.

Father Joseph had been away during the time occupied by these miraculous cures. On his return to Fiddler's Point he found the settlement in an uproar.

What's this they tell me about miracles being worked in your house?" he asked Mike. There was a suggestion of sternness in the good priest's voice, for to him this was altogether a serious matter, to be reported to his superiors in the church in any event, to be investigated solemnly, and if the work of error, to be sternly suppressed.

"They tell me that the picture has been curing Mistress McCrea and Janey Mack," he specified.

"Mike twisted the whip he had in his hands, and made several efforts before the machinery of his jaws could frame a reply.

"They do be sayin' so," he finally admitted.

"What do *you* say?" pressed the clergyman.

"They're both walkin';" came the slow answer.

There being nothing further to be elicited from Mike, Father Joseph went to see the late sufferers, and found both active, as reported. Still puzzled and anxious, not willing to let error slip

into his fold unchallenged, nor yet content to be himself an obstacle to what might be really the goodness of Heaven, the careful priest startled the Cassedys with a request. He had been troubled for years with an annoying malady of the nerves, which caused the left side of his face to twitch. Would the family permit him to sleep in the wonderful bed?

He had not meant to make this experiment public, but forgetting to enjoin the Cassedys to silence, the news soon spread like wildfire that Father Jo, no less, was himself going to sleep in Gramma McCrea's bed.

Many were the speculations upon the outcome of the priest's experiment, many would have been the comments if that little community could have witnessed the strange goings on in the grand bedroom, after the Cassedys had bade their reverend guest good night, and gone to their own untroubled repose. In the first place, Father Joseph produced several sacred emblems and instruments of his high office, and betook himself to devotions of so exceptionally lengthy a character that the clock was on the stroke of twelve when he had concluded. Even then he showed no evidence of an intention to undress, but arrayed himself rather in the robes of his calling, and with candle and book proceeded, according to long disused formulas, to determine whether the picture upon the bed-head could by any possible chance derive its extraordinary power from the spirit of darkness and evil.

A weird, yet impressive spectacle, the priest afforded, in that midnight solitude, performing sacred rites by the light of a solitary candle, with the purpose of guarding his parish against the presence of a possible necromantic influence.

Father Joseph was not a particularly superstitious man, but he was a highly imaginative, and exceedingly conscientious one, and his performance in the Cassedys' house that night was the antithesis of things frivolous or vain. At length, thoroughly satisfied that whatever the picture might be, it certainly was not the result of satanic inspiration, the conscientious priest laid off his clothes and pillowed his head beneath "Itself," where, weary with his long vigil, he soon dropped into a delicious sleep. He did not waken till Mrs. Cassedy, alarmed at his long silence, knocked timidly at the bedroom door. Cheerfully he answered her and

sprang from the bed, conscious of a new vigor. Before he had finished dressing, he became aware of a great change in himself. The nervous affection that had afflicted him for twenty years had entirely left him. He descended to the family living room in a state of amazement. The Cassedys gathered about him with ejaculations of wonder and expressions of joy, and before long half the parish had congregated at the teamster's door, to learn the new miracle that "Itself" had wrought.

For days following this event nothing else was talked of on Fiddler's Point. The ordinary affairs of life seemed of meagre importance compared with the astounding certainty that a series of supernatural works were being performed in that very neighborhood where so lately men had stood aghast and women had bemoaned the loss of property and the destruction of the fruits of lifelong labor.

Such congregations as Father Joseph welcomed at the little church of St. Ann, such reformations on the part of hardened backsliders, such conversions of recalcitrant heretics, such piety among the women of his flock, and such liberal donations to the various funds of the church, had never before been known in that poor parish.

As the rumors of the marvelous cures spread, and in spreading no doubt were magnified, other cripples, from other parishes, began to visit the poverty-stricken and long despised Point, and beg for admission to the potent presence of "Itself." From up and down the river they came, thicker and faster, till the Cassedys were at their wits' end to receive them, and at the same time conduct the domestic affairs of their home. Their privacy was a thing of the past, to be looked back upon with regret and longing. No more could Mike, returning from his day's work, stretch his coatless arms, and extend his shoeless stockings in the comfort of his own house. The children were arrayed from morning to night in their best dresses and their best manners, which, after the novelty had worn off, became highly irksome. Gramma McCrea, poor woman, had no more comfort in her grand room and wonderful bed, seeing that by day the premises were invaded by curious or anxious pilgrims, and by night generally occupied by one or more of the lame, the halt, or the blind.

At first, when those in direful plight petitioned for a chance to occupy the great bed, the hearts of Mrs. Cassedy and Gramma McCrea melted, and the strangers were made freely welcome, without charge, to the benefit they might derive from the curative influence of "Itself"; but after a time, acting under the advice of Father Joseph, they made a slight charge for the privilege. The honest Priest, full of pious joy at the development of such a marvel in his parish, notified his Bishop, and the latter came straightway to add the seal of his approval to a matter which promised to redound to the fame of his diocese.

When the great man entered the honored dwelling of the Cassedys, the little girls were awed into a becoming silence, and the women adorned themselves as for a great festival, and attended him with tremulous devotion, while even Mike was constrained to remain at home, to surrender the freedom of his muscular frame to the thraldom of Sunday broadcloth, and submit his bronzed neck to the irksome bondage of a starched collar. The Bishop questioned and was satisfied. Moreover, he was pleased to pronounce the episcopal benediction, and when he departed, left behind him an odor of sanctity, and the endorsement of his authority. After that the very door-yard of the Cassedys was not sufficient to contain the throng that gathered there daily, and the now prominent family longed secretly but fervently for a return to their former obscurity and the delightful peace of a quiet way of life.

When the Jefferson City *Palladium* got hold of the news, which it finally did, a young and enterprising reporter was detailed to take care of the item. He visited Fiddler's Point, with a determination to make a good story out of what he believed would prove a very small sensation. The reality so far exceeded his anticipations that upon his return to the office he wrote an enthusiastic account of his discoveries, embellished with numerous clever touches of an original character, and further adorned with a display head by which the wayfaring man, though a deafmute, could not fail to be stunned. In letters that would have lent distinction to a bill-board, men were invited to learn that a new Lourdes had been discovered, an American shrine that bade fair to rival the greatest religious healing establishments of the old world. The

curing of Father Burke was the text for half a column, in an article which occupied fully a page and a half of the *Palladium*.

One of the immediate effects of that publication was the fact that it attracted the attention of Doctor Hamilton Wilton, the great nerve specialist, newly returned from his sabbatical year in Europe.

"I'll just take a run down and look into this," he said, thoughtfully. "The phases of communal hysteria are sure to be exhibited beautifully during such an epidemic."

A series of surprises attended Doctor Wilton's visit to Fiddler's Point. In the first place, he recognized in the Cassedys' dwelling a house of his own, built three years before, on the Kansas River, below Topeka. He had made there a sort of hermitage, where he sometimes retired to pursue in solitude those scientific experiments which were his recreation. During the great flood, while he was absent in Europe, this building had been swept away, and he had imagined that, with its contents, it had been wrecked and carried piecemeal to the Mississippi.

Led by Mrs. Cassedy the Doctor ascended to Gramma McCrea's room, where the old woman sat in tedious state and explained in sentences so often repeated that they sounded like a lesson learned by rote, the marvelous story of the miracles wrought by "Itself." The corners of the room were already beginning to be filled with a collection of canes and crutches, inevitable attachments of a curative shrine. Wilton looked long and curiously at the picture over the bed, then with a compassionate interest at the woman, to whom already so evidently this exhibition had become a wearisome task. He placed his hand thoughtfully on the frame of the bedstead and ran his fingers along the moulding. Once he seemed upon the point of saying something in reply to Gramma McCrea's rehearsal, but at the end only thanked her courteously, and leaving a bank bill in her hand, bowed himself out.

The second surprise was when the Doctor stood at the rectory door, face to face with the Priest. For a while neither could find voice. As Ham and Jo, they had filled the hours of active boyhood with pranks and adventures, never undertaken singly, and had gained a brilliant, if unenviable, local reputation for mischief before they were fairly in their teens. Now the Physician and

the Pastor stood face to face, dumb because old recollections stubbornly combated the formality of mature propriety.

"Jo!—Jo!—you old——" Wilton choked.

"Ham! You sinner——" The priest drew him in and closed the door before flinging his arms around him and executing a fandango for which he was, at a later hour, becomingly penitent.

After awhile, when they were seated over a chop and a bottle of Chablis in a quiet room in the tower, Wilton told Father Jo the story of the house.

"Among the experiments that interested me just before my departure for Europe," he said, "those upon which I entered with the keenest zest were connected with the wonderful properties of the newly discovered mineral, radium. By singular good fortune I secured a very small quantity of this inestimably precious substance and tried to discover a means by which water or some other medium might be made radio-active, with a view to testing the curative powers which scientists, even then, were beginning to claim for radium. The mineral itself, you understand, is not only too enormously expensive, but far too powerful an agent for direct use. Such an employment of it, I believe, would result in ulcers, hideous deformity, insanity, and death. Reduced to an infinitesimal proportion in water, I conceived that the malefic properties of the substance might be made beneficent. Unwilling to trust my secret hopes to popular discussion, and being anxious to apply the result of my labors in the most effectual way, I purchased an old, massive bedstead, in the sides of which, having grooved them for the purpose, I inserted phials of fluid specially prepared, practically surrounding the occupant of the bed with what I hoped would prove a novel and effectual curative influence."

Doctor Wilton paused and as he sipped his wine looked earnestly at the Priest, whose face was a study of conflicting emotions. For a moment neither spoke. Then the Physician continued:

"A little picture, that I picked up in a curio shop in Florence, I hung at the bed's head, for no other reason than that it seemed to me a good place for it. I had no particular motive in putting it there, except a delight in decoration."

Again he paused. Finally Father Jo asked,

"**Have you been to the Cassedys'?**"

"I recognized the house before I entered," was the reply. "The bed and the picture are both mine."

"Are you telling me the truth, Ham Wilton, or is this one of your pranks?" asked Father Jo. "The story of the picture being a miracle-working relic was hard to believe, God forgive me, but this is harder. Do you know, beyond a doubt, that your science is doing this; is working these cures, I mean?"

"No, but——"

"Hold on a bit. Do you know that the picture — Itself — is not doing it?"

"No, but——"

"Easy, easy! You know neither the one thing nor the other. Perhaps 'Itself' is doing more than you think. Anyhow, you may be sure that God Almighty uses strange means to accomplish His purposes. What do you mean to do? Tell these people that their faith is naught, and make them a laughing stock to their neighbors?"

"Not so fast, Jo," answered the Doctor. "Do you mean to say that you will build faith upon a doubt, to use no stronger term. Isn't your religion big enough and broad enough to stand alone, without being bolstered by a — a——"

"A lie, you mean," broke in Father Jo hotly. Then, after a moment, his face changed. A noble expression chased away the troubled lines that had gathered there, and he rose and took his friend by the hand.

"The truth needs no lie to bolster it," he said. "You have given me a hard task, Hamilton Wilton; and sorely it goes against the grain to tell those good people that they have been fooling themselves. It'll be harder still," he added ruefully, "to tell the Bishop, but it must be done. It must be done."

The Doctor held the hand extended to him in a hearty grip.

"Fix it to suit yourself, Jo. As for me, I'm out of it. If I were to tell those people, they wouldn't believe me, and after all — Who knows?"

The Passing of Joe Mary.*

BY W. HANSON DURHAM.

IT was hot — so scorchingly hot that the very skyline itself seemed to writhe and waver unsteadily in a maze of undulating heat beyond the wide waste of chaparral and scattered sage bush which stretched monotonously away to the westward and the foothills beyond.

The man, sprawling listlessly out full length in the scant shade of a scraggly cactus, gasped again and stirred uneasily, then raised himself painfully to his elbow and gazed with fixed and glassy eyes toward the eastern horizon, which seemed only to mock him with its awful sense of utter desolation and loneliness. With a sigh, he reached gropingly about, like a blind man, until his trembling fingers finally found and clutched desperately at the blistering metal of a battered tin canteen which he lifted hopefully for the last, lingering drop, but only the same empty, hollow gurgle greeted his longing lips, and with a half-muttered curse, he flung it weakly from him and sunk, face downward, with wide outstretched arms again, his fingers working and clutching convulsively in the arid alkali dust of the desert.

Overhead, like a blotch against the brazen copper dome of sky, a solitary bird of great size swept lower in slow descending circles, and from out a cleft in the barren ledges a gaunt-limbed coyote crept and skulked and stood for a moment in doubtful uncertainty, then bared his gleaming teeth in a diabolical grin of anticipation.

"Water! water!" gasped the man incoherently. "For the love of God — a single drop — in this accursed hell!" and, at his murmurings, the bird and the beast drew closer. The bird hovered lower and croaked dismally — the beast simply sat back upon his haunches and waited and licked his white fangs with a dry

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pink tongue. The party was not complete — the feast could not begin until Death, the third guest, had come. The man groaned moaningly, and turned his head wearily, and slowly opened his eyes and looked about and saw them there.

"O God!" he pleaded, chokingly. "Wait — until I'm dead!" and he glared at them with fixed fascination until his fevered eyes seemed to glow and burn like globes of molten metal in their sunken sockets, and then all reason left him, and with a laughing oath upon his senseless lips, he fell back indifferent, upon the sand, and the great bird circled closer and the hungry beast crept nearer and sniffed, then lapped at the quiet, upturned face, unafraid.

Joe Mary, the hunted half-breed renegade, saw from his shelter behind a clump of withered buffalo grass growing close beside the trail at the base of the foothills, the circling buzzard and read its meaning, and shading his eyes with a bronze palm, he could see the shape of the prostrate trooper who had relentlessly followed him thus far and closely along the trackless trail.

The day before, Joe Mary simply grunted gutterally when he had, from long range, shot the soldier's pony from his ambush behind a sand hill beside the trail, but when his second shot pierced the trooper's almost empty canteen, he smiled grimly to himself with a greater satisfaction, for he knew the end was now nearer, and accordingly flattened himself out upon the neutral tinted, sun-baked earth, to watch and to wait.

He saw the persistent ploddings of his pursuer, and eyed with precious pleasure his first faltering steps, which grew, as the day lengthened and the heat strengthened, into erratic wanderings. He smiled again in triumph as he saw the trooper reel and fall — then crawl, helpless, gasping and choking, into the shade of the cacti, back beside the trail.

The heart of Joe Mary was now jubilant, and rising cautiously to his feet, he stood for a moment and closely scanned the flat eastern horizon. Grasping his stolen pony firmly by the nose, he strode boldly forth back along the barren trail, led on by the long accumulated hatred of his ancestors to behold and gloat gloriously at the last lingering touch of the exquisite torture of thirst.

The trooper gasped once and gulped greedily at the first touch of tepid moisture which fell tricklingly upon his grateful lips from

the canteen of Joe Mary, and with an effort he opened his eyes and struggled slowly to his elbow. All animosity was vanquished by the conquering, levelling thirst, and he reached blindly out to seize the tin which held more of the precious fluid, but with a sickening sneer, the half-breed stepped quickly back and shook it, splashing and tantalizing in its fulness, before his longing eyes, and then turned it deliberately out upon the absorbing sand.

For a moment the trooper simply sat and gasped and gazed in speechless desire at the sparkling water as it flowed and gushed, a cool, gurgling stream, from the mouth of the upturned canteen. With a dry, choking sob from a thick, swollen tongue, he lurched suddenly forward and plunged his face and hands into the momentary mud of moisture, and sucked and lapped at it ravenously, like a beast. Then, as the last drop vanished, he looked longingly up for more.

The half-breed grunted with gratification as he saw the pleading agony in the man's eyes — an agony stimulated and aroused anew, with aggravation, and he stepped closer and spat spitefully into the upturned, expectant face, then smiled mockingly as he slowly unslung a second canteen and, raising it to his own evil lips, drank long and deep.

The trooper's hands worked convulsively as he watched the wanton waste of water, and the light of returning reason grew quick and suddenly strong in his eyes. He felt the power of renewing strength increasing within him, and in desperate frenzy he struggled totteringly to his feet, and with limbs almost refusing to sustain him, he flung himself swayingly upon the half-breed and tried to tear the tempting tin from his lips. But Joe Mary simply dropped the canteen and seized him stranglingly by the throat and hurled him reeling weakly back, and drawing his revolver, covered the thirst-tempted, trembling trooper.

"Ah! You choke — fight for water — eh?" he said, smiling slowly, and he held the dripping canteen nearer.

"Yes!" the trooper gasped. "Give me more — you devil. Just another drop!" he pleaded pathetically, with wild, crazed eyes. Then his hand suddenly sought the butt of the weapon at his hip, as the half-breed shook his head sneeringly.

"You die for water, I guess!" taunted Joe Mary with intense,

savage instinct. "Mebbe I give one big drink — all, then shoot quick — eh? Plenty water over there," and he pointed with long, lean arm toward the foothills. "Mebbe I don't give water — eh, but go away and no shoot now. You die just as same! Which?" and he leered treacherously forward as he again held the canteen toward the trooper.

"Water!" gasped the man still chokingly, and he snatched greedily at the proffered tin and carried it joyfully to his lips. The water ran in a gurgling, grateful stream down his parched and swollen throat and oozed tricklingly from the corners of his mouth. Then, when at last the ecstasy was over and the awful, consuming thirst was conquered, he threw aside the empty tin and faced the half-breed's still threatening weapon.

"Now I'm ready to die. I've had a drink!" he remarked coolly, as he wiped the moisture from his lips and stood still, staggering a little, as the half-breed's eyes glittered and gleamed death to him over the sight of his menacing muzzle.

Overhead, the solitary buzzard still circled and looked down from dizzy heights and the coyote still skulked expectantly among the growing shadows of the sand hills.

Joe Mary paused, stepped back a pace and again raised his weapon. Then, just as the muzzle grew suddenly steady once more, and his bronzed forefinger begun to crook closely against the trigger, there came, sharp upon the still desert air, a quick, warning rattle and a subdued hiss at his feet, and with a wild look of abject terror in his evil eyes, he leaped quickly aside, and as he did so there was a sudden spurt of flame, followed by a quick puff of smoke and a sharp report, and Joe Mary pitched forward and lay still, face downward, in the alkali dust.

"Just a trick of the tongue!" muttered the trooper laconically, as he shoved his still smoking weapon back into its holster, and, climbing weakly upon the dead man's pony, rode off in the direction of the foothills.

A Lost Bargain.*

BY CHARLES POOLE CLEAVES.

"GOD is making more people all the time, but He isn't making any more coast-line."

When my eyes fell on these words the fore-feet of my chair came to the floor emphatically.

"Lina!"

My wife rushed in from the dining-room.

"I'm going to buy a cottage down on the coast of Maine."

"Mercy! I thought something was the matter."

She smiled the wrinkles out and the dimples in, and her blue eyes looked at me with a charming confidence. She really adores me. That is why I married her.

"There is! Listen:

> **BARGAIN.**—Our most desirable property is held for the highest bidder, but must be sold in June. Broad sea view, magnificent coast line, expanse of sky and beach. Ten-room cottage, newly furnished. Price asked, $2000.—Maine Coast Agency, Portland, Maine.

"Oh, George!" Disappointment.

"What's the matter, Lina? Isn't that g-lorious?"

"George, when we *do* get a cottage—I don't believe you can really afford it now, dear—when we do get a sea-shore lot, I want something dainty and secluded. Just a cottage nestling among the oaks or birches, with peeps of the sea, lovely nooks in the woods and hiding places among the boulders on the shore—wild flowers and shrubbery in the background, and islands off shore, green and shadowy. That broad expanse of sky and sea and beach would give me a broad expanse of seasickness, I know."

"Pshaw, Lina! You need more sunlight." I checked my argumentative tone and began to honey. My wife likes to be honeyed—that's why I married her. "My little bird mustn't stay

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in her nest all the time. She needs to be out on the wing where the sun can shine on her feathers — on your cheeks, I mean, — and make them blush; out in the grand sea-breeze where your lungs can expand and all the tired wrinkles fade out of your eyes — "

"Mercy, George, don't! Tired wrinkles, indeed! They are all in your brain. Now listen to me."

She ran her fingers hastily over a budget of letters in her desk and drew out one from a seventeenth cousin, once removed:

"DEAR EMILINE:

"If you are just quick enough about it you can secure the loveliest cottage and lot on the coast of Maine. My aunt occupied it last summer. I visited her. It is the daintiest, sweetest nook in all that beautiful state. The cottage peeps out from rare old oaks and beeches, and the grounds stretch back to the dearest old pasture! And the wild flowers! Buttercups and daisies, violets, bird-on-the-wings, jack-in-the-pulpits, strawberry-blossoms — all these in June, and many others. And in August the bushes are just loaded with blueberries and blackberries. Aunt Maria canned forty-one quarts last summer, —

"Think of that, George!"

"and along the shore, underfoot of the old trees, are little caves, where the water comes trickling down and ripples over the rocks, glistening in the sun; and the beaches are strewn with pebbles and sea-shells — "

"George, she goes on for six pages just like that. Then — listen!

"It belongs to a widow whose name I've forgotten, but Aunt Maria wrote me it's to be sold, and if you will write her she will secure it. Only she must have liberty to bid against others if necessary. The woman has been offered nine hundred."

"Shucks, Lina! My dear wife! What can you buy for nine hundred? Probably only a shack of a cottage on some wild pasture land. Now this price is just right — two thousand dollars! Broad sea view! Magnificent coast line! Expanse of sea and sky! Just think of it! I'm going down to Maine tonight!"

"George."

"Lina — my dear!"

"Wouldn't it be better to wait and write for particulars?"

"And lose both chances! I'd better look them up. Only, if this one is satisfactory, we'd better not bother with the — the little one, would we, sweetheart?"

"N-no, George. But you won't mind if I write Priscilla about it?"

"Certainly not! Buy it, if you wish. Then we'll have two!" I said it magnanimously. My wife has resources of her own — though that was not why I married her.

I glanced at my watch, which was ticking rapidly in the excitement of the moment, and hurried up to my room to pack a grip for the boat. Allowing a leeway of three cars on the Elevated Subway, I could reach the wharf in season. I was pained at a little quiver of my wife's lips when she kissed me good-bye, and sorry there was no time to smooth things over and put her into my way of thinking. My wife doesn't argue — in fact, that is one reason why I married her.

It was great on the sea that night! The ocean was calm as a sleeping warrior — the great-hearted, broad-bosomed ocean, on whose forehead rested the curled horizon clouds in great golden clusters, as the sun went down. It refreshed my eyes to measure the great distances, to stare at the twinkling lighthouses, the deep nest of stars, the shadowy outline of the North shore. My lungs drank of the inexhaustible fountain of air. I like things on the large. To be sure, it isn't exactly my wife's way of thinking. She likes dainty things, which seems a trifle womanish — I suppose it is womanly. Anyway, even now, after the grievance I have to confess in this story, I'm glad I married her.

I appeared at the Maine Coast Agency at 8 A. M. next day. The manager was a man just to my liking. We agreed enthusiastically on what constitutes the ideal coast scenery, — nearly exhausted ourselves in doing so. He left the office to his clerks, tucked me into his private launch, and we rippled across the bay. Sea like a floor! Stately islands! Not so many high cliffs as I like, but rocky points jutted out into the ocean and sturdy old boulders were braced up to meet the waves of any gale.

"There's the property," cried the manager, pointing to the eastern shore.

I think my eyes flashed pleasure. We saw it miles away. Those magnificent trees parted just enough to enhance the impress of the cottage on the mind. It was half-tide. On the right lay a white sea-beach, sparkling like a jeweled pavement. In front of the cottage and up the cove at the left lay great round rocks, where, for centuries, they had been pummelled and ground by the

sea. I drew a long breath. We came alongside the wooden pier, on which I looked back long enough to feel how completely the view answered the description; then we went up to survey the premises.

The cottage was just to my liking — furnishings, too. The chairs were broad enough to sit on, the couches would admit feet, and the bureaus would hold a summer's laundry. I felt just a twinge of conscience as I thought the rooms lacked the coziness of my wife's boudoir (which, however, she arranged herself) but there would be compensation for her in the big closets. At least there are two things built on a large scale which my wife considers admirable — closets and myself.

Then we returned to the piazza.

The far ledge swam at sea-level. Calm streaks wound about the bay — singular paths of the No-wind across the haunts of the Wind. An old sail lay on the rustic seat, and the "slish" of the canvas as I crumpled it in my hands had a delightful sound. The salt air was refreshing. Across the cove the shadows of overhanging oaks fell on the rocks. An old orchard craned upward along the rampart bank, green with grass — venerable trees, hoar with apple blossoms, symbols of age and eternal youth. Out on the southern horizon fleecy puffs rose like tufts of foam afloat on the sea.

There it was! Just what I wanted! Mine, if I had only said the word there and then. And I left it! Yes, I left it without clinching the bargain. It was cheap enough at two thousand. Fool that I was, I wanted to chaffer a little, and get it for less. That was possible — anyway I had the option on it till refused. So we went back to the city.

The manager seemed disappointed by my reticence. After we reached the office I was ready to chaffer, but the stenographer interrupted us as we entered.

"Telegram from Mrs. Dutch, sir."

"Confound it! What does the woman want now?"

"'Hold property. Offered two thousand. Will write.'"

"Is this a put-up job, sir?" I blurted out. He turned red to the collar.

"No, no, my dear sir! Believe me! By Jove, but it looks

like it, doesn't it! That woman can't leave the property in my hands twenty-four hours without interference. Now, I'll tell you what — do I understand that you want it at two thousand dollars?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I think you have the option on it. But I mustn't offend Mrs. Dutch. I'll fix it up if I can, and at that figure. If more is offered, I assure you, you shall have opportunity. I'll send you the bidder's name, — yes, sir, I'll put you in correspondence with Mrs. Dutch, too. 'Pon my word, this shall be a fair show for you, for they want desirable neighbors in that region, sir. You certainly have the option on it, so far as I'm concerned."

I confess my heart sank. I thought of the other property. But to find it would require a telegraph message to Maria Gould, and the lot might be anywhere along shore between Cape Porpoise and Camden. Besides, I didn't really want it under consideration. It might lead to a — difference of opinion with my wife. I took the train home.

"George," said my wife, calmly, after her affectionate greeting. (We sat on the sofa together—that's one thing I married her for.) "Are you too tired to talk about it?"

"Well, I think I can brace up to it," I said, with an inward shudder as I prepared to confess failure. "What do you want to know?"

"Oh, everything. Is there anything cozy about it?"

"Nothing so cozy as this, my dear." You may guess what happened.

"There, George. Weren't there any dainty nooks and shy retreats, sweet flowers and lovely lounging-places—such as Priscilla's letter described of the place she wrote about?"

I groaned. "I didn't see any, darling. But don't worry. I didn't buy, and — I don't know but you were right last night, my dear. Perhaps I can't afford it."

"I'm glad," she said, relieved. "I thought you couldn't. I bought mine. I telegraphed Maria Gould last night to bid mine in at any cost up to two thousand. That's what you said yours would cost, didn't you?"

"For heaven's sake, Lina!" I exclaimed. For the first time

in my life I glared at her — yes, sir, I glared at that sweet woman! And for the first time in my life I was speechless. The door-bell rang.

"Sit down, George. Do be calm. It's only the newsboy."

It was a messenger boy with a telegram.

"Here's a reply from Maria Gould, George."

> MRS. EMILINE STUBBS:
> Mrs. Dutch says $2,000. Sold to you.

"Mrs. Dutch?" I sat down, weakly. I have some power of intuition. "Call the boy back. Yes, yes, it's all right, dear. Lucky woman — glad for you — give him this." She read it first and — well, she has some intuition, too:

> MANAGER MAINE COAST AGENCY, PORTLAND, ME.
> Call it off. Let the woman have it. GEORGE STUBBS.

The oddest part of it is that my wife insists that this delightful shore property, which we now enjoy together, exactly answers Priscilla's description. I tell her it is all in her eye. She doesn't argue. She owns the property. She had her own way, as usual. That is why she married me.

Una—the Alone.*

BY ANNE DE BONNEVILLE SCOTLAND.

THE moon shone brightly upon a broad, steep trail, leading upward through a dense, quaking, aspen forest, toward Pine Mesa lakes. The measureless solitude was broken by an occasional cry from the wild—a mountain lion or cat prowling through the hills, while the incessant, full-throated grief of a mourning-dove complaining to its mate, imparted a strange weirdness to the scene.

A twig suddenly snapped in the broad pathway as the foot of an animal crushed it.

There was a slight movement behind one of the ghostly, silver, aspen trees. A man's head suddenly dodged to one side, and peered cautiously through the slits cut in his black mask.

A stray moonbeam, broken into wavering sheen and shadow by the quivering aspen leaves, touched a shining black thing he held firmly in his hand, pointing it toward the path. Another dried branch cracked sharply. The soft thud of galloping hoofs approached, sinking into the deep wood mould with scarcely a sound.

"Hold up your hands!" the black mask suddenly cried, and leaped into the trail to grasp the bridle rein of a horse.

A soft laugh sounded upon the night air, and a girl, with fearless grace, bent forward and touched the man's arm.

"I know your voice, Dan Kirby! What are you masquerading in this guise for? You nearly took my breath away."

"You couldn't be nigh as scart as I am now to think what might 'a' happened. Whar air yu goin', an' why air yu out alone in the mountains on this night, of all nights?"

"I am going for the Doctor."

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"Likely story now; goin' up to Bars' Caves for a Doctor, instead o' ridin' down in the valley to Sheldon!"

"Didn't you know that Dr. Lamping was camping up here near Trout Lake? Where's your arithmetic? Which is greater, twice twelve to the Lakes and back, or twice twenty to Sheldon and back?"

"Which side o' the lake is he campin'?" the man asked suspiciously. "Near that cussed Englishman?"

"No, I keep the trail to the right."

"Who's sick?" he enquired again, with the same incredulous tone.

"Surely you ought to know that Worden is worse. The man Hal Derwent's game warden shot."

"I was there myself at sundown;" Dan said, slowly. "His wife allowed he was feelin' better. That Englishman 'ull get his come-up-ance yet," he muttered fiercely.

"That is none of my business, Dan; my errand is one of mercy and urgent, and I am waiting for you to let me pass."

She smiled down upon the black mask sweetly. A gentle, lovable smile he and all the cowboys knew so well. The moon caressed each outline of her small, oval face, the violet eyes grew larger and wider, with a deep, far-away look, which the cowboys said came from way back in her strange young life — that baby life, so nearly swept away in the flood — the terrible uprising of the Embudo river. Dan, himself, had often told the story to an eager, interested crowd of cowboys.

"When you see them eyes grow deep as a lake, with all them pretty shadders hidin' away in 'em, an' a look kinder like she'd seen all the angels of God settin' 'round an' playin' on their harps, an' the gentlest smile that comes to her lips, like she was driftin' far off from us, then I allers 'low she's gone back to that night o' sorrows, when her paw an' maw put her in the cedar chest to sleep. When they was all sleepin' sound, there came a big cloudburst. The river rised up all on a suddent, and carried off the house. The water bore up the chest like it was Noah's ark they was foolin' with, but they drownded her paw an' maw. She loves Crawford like he was her own Daddy, an' he kaint do too much for her ever sense the day he found her — a little dove — floatin'

in the ark. But law, yu know, boys, how we-alls feel toward a calf that hain't got no mammy. We jest let that leetle gal get 'round us, an' derned ef I'll ever stan' in her path for nuthin'. There's a verse I hearn onct when I was a kid — better have a mill-stun tied round your neck an' be drownded like a rat than to mistreat one o' them leetle ones. An' I've always 'lowed she's one o' them. Ef I ever turn her down I jest calkilate that I'm a dyin' buck from that time on."

Did Una — the alone — realize the power she exercised over these irresponsible, illiterate, cowboys and ranchmen of the plains?

She drew a quick breath of suspense. Dan Kirby would forfeit his life if the angry mob below discovered that he had allowed any one to go through the picket line formed to guard the trail. But Dan had decided.

"Pass on, child. Ef yu stay here any longer with the moon shinin' on your face that-a-way, I'll kneel right on the ground in front o' yu. Speak up, Una, yu look like yu was a speerit."

"Thank you, Dan," and with another of those fleeting, graceful movements, Una bent down from her horse and laid a soft hand in his.

"I mistrust your doctor story. Yu never could tell a lie, Una. it shows right out in your innercent eyes. Ef yu meet any one that hails yu, say very low 'Una — the alone.' Them is the words that lets the mob pass up to Hal Derwent's crack o' doom. Slip this black mask over your face, draw your black cape 'round you tight. Your high boots an' no skirt showin' below the cape, an' cross a saddle like you're ridin', any one 'ud take yu for a lad. Don't look at me like that . Gosh! I believe yu're a speerit yet."

"I'm a good hour ahead of the mob," thought Una, as she dashed past Dan.

Dad Crawford and Una had reasoned with the mob to no avail. The men swore with dreadful oaths that any man who even sympathized with Hal Derwent would be shot and his property destroyed. Hal was a fine, well-built young fellow, generous to excess, and square in his business dealings. He owned the lakes and enforced the game laws in order to protect the mountain trout. The streams had been depleted by law-breaking citizens for many years. Hal gave orders to arrest trespassers, but never to shoot

one. Worden had openly defied Jim Duncan, one of the game wardens. An old, private feud existed between the two men, and Jim had levelled his revolver and fired.

As Una sped rapidly over the miles to Trout Lake, Bucking Moony, her cow pony, suddenly shied violently across the road.

They were galloping over an open park, with stately rows of spruce and pine trees on the sloping hillsides. In the path of light made by the moon, Una saw a figure approaching. Her heart beat violently in sudden fright. She was within two miles of Trout Lake on the trail to the left; it would be useless to mention Dr. Lamping now, his camp lay in the opposite direction. Una whipped out the mask, slipped it over her face, under the close black cap she wore, and drawing the cape around her, galloped boldly onward.

"Hold up your hands!" thundered a deep, commanding voice; and Una reined up Moony so promptly, that she fell back upon her haunches.

"Una — the alone."

The words came in hoarse, muffled tones from the black mask, sitting so straight and fearless upon Bucking Moony. Una had unconsciously shut her eyes. When she opened them to peep through the slits in her mask, there stood Hal Derwent himself.

She quickly removed the mask, the loosened cape revealing a strand of bronze hair which had strayed from its fastening, and lay in a soft curl against her cheek. Una sat perfectly still, bathed in the white moonlight, every curve of her figure blending with the horse on its haunches, like a wonderful statue.

Hal sprang hurriedly to her side.

"Hush!" the girl whispered cautiously. "You haven't a moment to lose, you must fly for your life. Remember those cattle rustlers the cowboys hung. Hal, I tell you, from a hundred miles down in the valley, the men have been gathering. I have never heard such fearful denunciations as they have heaped upon you. Look, Dad sent a purse for ready money, and a suit of his clothes. Here's a black mask, too. Put them on and don't lose a moment. Dad planned everything; he bade me ride with you to Douglas and point out the trail. Dad said that we must hide in the cave I discovered, and when it was safe, push on to Douglas. I took

some provisions up there this summer, just for fun. Hurry, hurry, Hal, I hear a voice behind us."

It seemed to Una that Hal spent hours getting into Dad's clothes. In reality it took him three minutes.

He sprang up behind her on Moony, and they were speeding well along the trail before Una asked:

"Why were you out so late at night with a revolver? Did you suspect anything?"

"No, indeed! I could not sleep and thought a walk would do me good. A revolver is always in my belt up here.

"Una, there is something moving behind those pines in front of us. Put on your mask quickly, and wrap the cape around you well. Now, go slowly, so we may not appear to be running away."

"There are five men stationed there, Hal, to cut off your retreat to Fayetteville, in case you escaped. If they hail us, say in a low tone, 'Una — the alone.' This will pass us through any of the guards. I had hard work to make my voice sound like a man's."

"You did it mighty well," Hal answered simply. "It never occurred to me that you were not a man."

"Hands up!"

The cry burst like a trumpet blast through the woods. Although Una expected it, she started and trembled, but pressed her chattering teeth close together with a firm resolve.

"Una — the alone."

Hal's voice sounded strange with an intonation of the plains.

"Are you bound for the next station?" asked one of the masked group. "We 'lowed the fool Englishman 'ud make a break for Fayetteville, so we-uns stationed big Sam that a-way, at the fork o' the trail. He's by his lonesome an' ul' be glad to see yu. What's took your other horse?"

"We missed the trail an' stuck in that hell of a bog. I left him to get out by hisself, and cum on 'cordin' to orders."

Hal imitated Dan Kirby exactly.

"Thought you was furder down, Dan."

"I was, but Simon-the-bird took my place."

"So long, good luck to you. They're goin' to wipe up the earth with their guns, as a signal, so as we-alls can get in to the hangin'," one of the men called gruffly; and Una and Hal galloped onward.

After the moon set they found it very difficult to keep the trail across Pine Mesa to Una's cave. Hal's reflections were bitter. He had taken such boyish pride in his summer mountain home, ten thousand feet above sea level. The artistic cottage, the fish hatchery, and the little log hotel, where he entertained his friends, represented an expenditure of sixty thousand dollars. These would be burned to the ground. He was giving out trout all the time with lavish hand to stock lakes and streams, and now the law-breakers were hunting him down like a wild beast, hungry for his blood. Hal knew that he could never set foot on Pine Mesa again. The horror of one ugly tragedy, when the cattle rustlers were hung, still clung to him. His heart swelled with indignation and grief. Una heard a sound suspiciously like a sob.

"Don't feel badly, Hal."

Her voice was low and sweetly tremulous.

A soft breeze blew aside the long cape, and swept a tress of subtly perfumed, bronze hair against his face.

Hal pressed it to his lips. This guarded caress, which he thought Una would never discover, tingled through her body in a sudden wave of delicious emotion. The blood surged to her cheeks. She was glad of the darkness.

They rode on in silence for awhile.

"When will we make the cave, Una?"

"About daylight, I should think."

"It will be my part, then, to cook breakfast for two, and let you rest." Hal spoke with resolute cheerfulness.

"I can catch trout," Una answered gaily. "It will not be safe for you outside the cave. Dad said we must stay there for twenty-four hours. He told me of a new trail to Douglas, which he discovered some months ago. No one knows about it but himself. Dad drew a map and showed me the gulch where it begins."

"Did he really appear concerned about me?" Hal asked stiffly.

Una did not know that, in a recent private interview between the two men, Hal had asked Dad Crawford's permission to marry her. She would have felt a trifle indignant if she had heard her adopted father's reply:

"Leave the child to me — she is mine — I found her. You are young, with all that wealth brings in its train. I am old and have

but one thing — my little girl. It is the old story of the Bible over again. An only ewe lamb, and the rich man who covets the poor man's all."

Hal and Una rode slowly through the darkness, Bucking Moony picking her steps carefully up the rough mountain-side. Hal's heart beat tumultuously, and, in spite of his troubles, triumphantly. He was alone with his love. She was risking everything to save him. Dad's words, "leave her to me — she is mine," came to him. He changed them slightly to suit himself.

"She is mine — give her to me — I love my love, and my love loves me."

The lines fell in the slow rhythm of Moony's gait. When she suddenly stopped short and puffed for breath, Hal lost the tune.

"What's the matter, old girl?"

He sprang to the ground and went to her head.

"We have come to an awfully steep climb, Una. I'll walk and you stay on."

But even Una's light weight proved too much for Moony. She gave a bound to make the ascent, and if the girl had not jumped off, would have fallen backward.

"Shall I strike a match and see where we are?"

"No, Hal, it isn't safe."

Una held Moony's bridle while Hal cautiously crept forward a step at a time.

"This seems to be a round basin on top of the mountain," he said at length.

"Then I know where we are. It is the Devil's Kitchen, and my cave is several miles to the right."

"Surely no one can be here, Una."

"A quick thought's a slippery thought," she retorted, as Bucking Moony snorted and became so terrified that they had hard work to hold her.

"Listen!"

There was a sudden strange sound — burr — urr — urr, and two live coals peered out of the blackness in front of them, then another loud call; Hoowuff.

"It's a bear!" Una screamed, flinging her arms out wildly.

"Hush!" Hal commanded, softly.

"If he comes at us I'll shoot, but we must avoid an encounter, if possible."

Still hanging on to the terrified horse, they started back down the steep, rough mountain-side, slipping and sliding over stones and loose earth, with Moony almost on top of them. There was no sound of pursuit. As they reached the bottom, a sharp, loud Hoowuff, came from the Devil's Kitchen, followed by a deep growl.

"I was never so near a bear before," Una said, shivering like Moony. "It frightened me more than anything else tonight. Perhaps, because it was so dark."

Hal's strong arms were around the girl. He lifted her gently on Moony's back.

"Do you know the way now, Una?"

"Perfectly," she answered. "We go up two more steep hills before we reach our cave. Dad calls me his little compass. You can't lose me in these mountains."

"I am completely bewildered," Hal replied, filled with admiration of Una's knowledge. "You are mighty courageous, Una, even if you did tremble at a bear."

"You trembled too," she answered quickly.

"Not at the bear."

"When then, sir? Come now, own up."

"I could face a bear all right. But, Una, you were so excited that you clung to me with both arms round my neck; and the beating of your heart was — well, the sweetest thing I ever felt. I never had anything so nice happen to me before."

"I never did," Una cried, indignantly. "You were so excited yourself, you don't know what happened."

"I'll never forget it, Una, if I live to be a hundred."

"What, the bear?"

"Oh, no, something else. Bear and mob would matter nothing, if that could happen again."

And after this Una never spoke until they reached her cave.

The gray light of dawn crept over the hills, revealing misty, white clouds, which hung down and enveloped their summits. Una and Hal were busily picking leaves from the aspen trees and pulling up grass with their hands to feed Moony.

"She will have to be tied in the cave," Una said.

"When the clouds come down like that, Hal, Dan Kirby says: 'It looks jest like someone was movin' a sheet along on top of 'em.' Dan is so quaint. He knew where I was going. I couldn't fool Dan, and he let me pass; so he saved your life."

"I think, Una — the alone, saved my life."

"Yes, the words," she replied.

"No, Una herself; and I know that I will remember it as long as I live."

"It does not seem like much to do now, with the morning light upon us," she answered gravely.

After they had tied Moony, Hal made a small fire at the mouth of the cave. Rock Creek swept past a short distance below, the musical sound of its hurrying water calling a welcome. Una brought out the supplies she had carried up earlier in the summer. Coffee, a little bacon, and batter cakes made out of flour and water. The boy and girl thought that nothing was ever half so delicious before. Then Hal ventured out, while Una kept guard, and cut spruce boughs, with a hunting knife he always carried. These he piled upon the cave floor, and laid the saddle blankets over them. He arranged another couch for himself. The tired fugitives lay down and soon slept soundly, Moony following their example.

A sound roused Una at noon. Their cave was concealed by a rock slide, piled irregularly outside. Several pine trees, springing from the rocks, reached upward until their boughs brushed against a ledge above. These made a very effective screen.

Hal had taken the precaution to scatter dried branches in front of the opening, so that they were completely hidden.

Una peeped out cautiously and saw two cowboys standing by the creek. She could hear their conversation plainly.

"He must 'a' bolted fur Fayetteville, an' yet here's a horse's tracks. They stop, an' by gum! they start ag'in toward them trees.

Una touched Hal softly.

He sprang up quickly.

"They are coming this way, Hal."

White to the lips, her graceful form swayed toward him like the stem of a lily. Hal held her hand in a firm grasp.

"Don't be frightened, they can't find us."

As he spoke, the other man answered:

"Prob'bly a stray horse from the Bar I outfit; likely's not he's crossed the stream to better grazin'."

They were approaching the cave. Hal grasped his revolver.

"Don't fire unless you have to," Una entreated. "One of them is Dan; he let me pass up to you and will throw the other man off the track."

This seemed to be Dan's endeavor.

"Shucks! he couldn't 'a' cum here with a horse an' vanished like a spook. Some way or 'nother he's got wind o' the mob, an' likely's not is on the way to Denver now, caught a night freight. Yu'll find out I'm right."

"Curse the luck!" his companion replied.

Una's color did not return until long after the two men had galloped off toward Fayetteville. She realized then what it would mean to her if Hal lost his life. He looked so noble and handsome sitting there, with his head up, proudly defiant. But the odds were against him. It was pitiful to be thus in hiding for one's life.

They sat for a time in silence, Hal still holding Una's hand.

"Tell me something more about Dad Crawford finding you in the chest, Una."

"You never tire of that story," she answered, the pathetic-drifting-back smile hovering over the perfect bow of her lips.

"Did you know the cedar chest I floated in was an altar, belonging to the old adobe building used for mission services? The Mexicans said that my life would be consecrated to some great deed because I slept inside the altar; and now it has come true, Hal, for Una — the alone, has given a noble life back to the world."

"You will never be Una — the alone after this," Hal said, deeply moved. "From now on through eternity it will be Una and Hal. What matters loss of property, if I gain you? Dad refused me the right to win your love, but circumstances have changed the situation. If I should be obliged to give up my home in England, I would gladly throw over everything on earth for your sweet sake. I would be a cow puncher, and earn wages for you — my Una —

but never again the alone, for I love you! I love you! I love you!"

Now that Hal's tongue was loosened, he could not stop. With all the intensity of boyish fervor, he poured out his heart.

"Oh, my dear, little honey girl, I can't do without you. Every little nerve of me is on edge with longing for you. I have dreamed of you, Sweetheart, and thought so much about this thing. You have no idea how much I love you — Una — the beloved — but I swear from this day on, never again, the alone. Your mother must be near us now in our peril. I am sure that you love me too, Una. Last night revealed it to me in a hundred different ways. Say that it is so, sweet. There is a joy born of grief, and I have won you in the throes of these last hours. Tomorrow, you must make me the happiest man in the whole world. We will hunt up Father Byrnes in Douglas and get married before we take the train. Will you marry me, Una, the outcast Englishman? Oh, honey, say yes, for I love you! I love you! I love you!"

Una laid her pretty head against his arm.

"I have found out something too, Hal; there is nothing in all the world worth anything but love."

"It will be a real runaway match," they said to each other, laughing, as boy and girl will. There were so many things to discuss. Hal told Una about his home in England, where they would go for the present, until he could start life over again somewhere in the great West of America.

Una confided to Hal her father's anxiety about their journey to Douglas. "Dad said we must not mind what people might say; but he dreaded gossip, and wanted me, if possible, to return last night. He thought that I might run across Bob Kent, his old partner, and send him with you. Bob came up to cut logs yesterday. But I had to act quickly; it was the only thing to do. And, besides, you were really safer with Una — the alone."

"Una — the beloved," Hal corrected quickly. "There will be no gossip when they hear of our marriage, my dear little honey girl."

They were sitting together that evening, looking out upon the soft glamour of moonlight through the trees.

"Una — the alone!" a voice suddenly called from the silent night.

They started and clung to each other in fear. Again the voice cried:

"Una — the alone."

"It is dear old Dan," Una said, "shall we answer?"

"Better wait a moment, Sweetheart."

Presently they saw him coming toward the cave.

"I know yu an' Hal's here, Una; it's only old Dan, deary, don't get skeered."

He approached the cave with weary feet.

"I've done a sight o' travelin' to find you, an' I cum in peace, God bless yu both. Say, Una, I brung Father Byrnes along from Douglas. I kalkilated he wouldn't do no harm here. Him an' me can kind o' chaperon this party, an' look after our little gal. Do yu care ef I bring him up, children?"

Una sprang forward and threw her arms around his neck.

"Oh, Dan, you darling!"

There was a little sob in her voice. In this supreme moment he represented father and mother, and all who would have witnessed the coming ceremony under other circumstances.

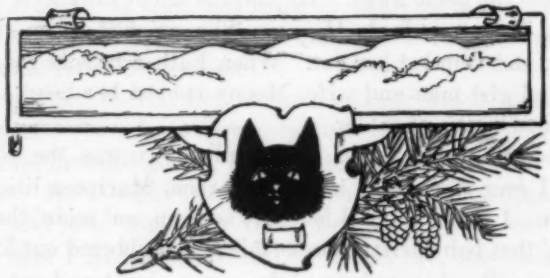
Hal followed her into the moonlight. The two stood side by side, as Father Byrnes emerged from the shadows.

Dan gave the bride away. He and the silent hills were the only witnesses, except, indeed, Moony. She neighed when they left her alone, and Dan led her out. When Father Byrnes pronounced the boy and girl man and wife, Moony rubbed her head affectionately against Una's shoulder.

Dan told Dad Crawford afterwards: "It was the solemnest wedding I ever seed. She looked like them Mariposa lilies in the moonlight. I never knowed her eyes so deep, an' seein'-the-angels-like. An' that baby-driftin'-back-smile. I blubbered out loud, like a kid. Seems like she was born o' the waves, christened out o' doors, an' now married to a man the mob was huntin', out alone in the hills at night, with only me to witness for her an' Father Byrnes to say the words. Her innercent little face so sweet an' glad. The pretty, pale light jest lovin' an' huggin' an' windin' round her like a bridal veil. The water singin' a hymn as it swept against the bank, talkin' low to her, like a mother to a baby at her breast. The spruce trees an' pines standin' up for bridesmaids, an' kinder

sayin' soft an' gentle as they breshed together in the breeze, 'God keep thee, God keep thee.' An' the breeze wrapped her round too, an' loved her, like we all do. It sighed gentle like — Una — the beloved; Una — the beloved. It was all kinder pitiful, an' the lad an outcast. Byrnes an' I stayed near 'em that night, an' started 'em on the trail to Douglas. We kinder fooled round an' guarded the trail. But it was all right, for I throwed 'em off the scent by discoverin' his tracks way over to Fayetteville. To be sure, I made the tracks myself. Those damned scoundrels burnt up all the lad's property. But he'll come out all right. He's got good stuff in him. I gave him your message an' blessin', an' he 'lowed yu was mighty good. He was plumb tickled to death to get Una; said it was wuth all he had lost.

"The whole thing cum on us like the thunder crashin' in an April shower; but it's all over now, an' the sun is shinin' onct more."



Hanifa.*

BY EDGAR J. BANKS.

FRIDAY found the Immam Abdullah squatted cross-legged upon the platform of the mosque. Before him, on a little stand, lay the open Koran upon which his eyes were fixed, while his chubby forefinger was energetically gesticulating to the group of excited women about him. From the expression upon his face, and the sharp interruptions from his audience, it seemed that at last, in his old age, after a life filled with the thousand theological battles, and crowned with a thousand victories, he had met his Marathon, for the longer he argued the louder grew the expostulations of the women.

"The Prophet, — peace be upon him, — " repeated Abdullah for the tenth time that day, and with an expression of increasing despair, "received from Paradise a message that man might have four wives. You, ladies of Mecca, demand that if a man has four wives, a woman may have four husbands. Had that been Allah's will, he would long ago have revealed it."

"But Allah did not say that we should not have four husbands," cried the women. "O great Abdullah," they continued, "Allah has revealed many things through the Prophet, and we are obedient to all his laws; other things are yet to be revealed. Therefore, learn for us Allah's will. Pray that he may reveal to you, you who remember the Prophet, you who were among those to welcome him back to Mecca, you through whom Allah has already revealed so many things, if a woman may not have four husbands as a man has four wives."

Abdullah groaned, for his reputation as a holy man was at stake; he had employed every argument to bring these wives of Mecca to contentment, yet they had defeated him, and demanded from him a special revelation.

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"I will ask Allah to reveal his will," he sighed. "Next Friday I will impart it to you."

Still groaning in spirit, he arose from the floor, feebly moved across the straw matting to the door, poked his fat, bare feet into his sandals, and went home.

Abdullah's past history had been an interesting one. He was a small, bare-footed boy when the prophet Mohammed returned to Mecca, and now of all the people left in the Holy City, he alone had seen him. Inspired by that rare privilege, he marked out for himself the career of a holy man. When his chin was first fuzzy with the down which evolved into the largest of patriarchal beards, he wandered as a dervish, but to suffer from hunger and thirst, and to lacerate his own body, soon ceased to be pleasures, and finally he settled down as an immam in the Holy City to gain an easier livelihood by fleecing the visiting pilgrims. In his profession he prospered. He alone was entrusted with the keys of the Kaaba, and so great was his reputed piety that he was consulted in every religious controversy. All of his decisions were law, and now he was passing his last days recording for the benefit of posterity his theological views.

During his long life Abdullah had seen but one sorrow — his wives had died one after another, yet that was not the cause of his grief, for never for long did he lack his full quota of wives which, both living and dead, he could count to a score. The one thorn in his flesh was that this score or more of wives had presented him with but a single offspring, a daughter, whom he had named Hanifa. This solitary plant of the harem grew and blossomed into a dark, slender, large-eyed Arab maid, sending out her tendrils of love until they entwined about the old man's heart, as if to compensate him for his lack of sons. She was the only child of twenty passing wives.

"Baba," tenderly said Hanifa, as her father, leaving the crowd of angry women in the mosque, had returned home and squatted before the dish of pilaf, which he left untasted, "Are you ill?"

"No, child," replied Abdullah, with an audible sigh, yet without paying his customary visit to the harem, he retired.

The next morning when Abdullah appeared, his eyes were sunken, for he had passed a sleepless night. During the dark

hours his audience of clamoring women was ever before him, and although he had a thousand times successfully interpreted the laws of the Koran, now he had failed; his wits had deserted him, and no revelation came; his reputation as an immam would be ruined, and all the wisdom displayed in the past would be in vain.

Thus tortured, he slept none and ate little. Half a dozen times daily Hanifa urged him to impart to her the cause of his sorrows, and as often did he deny that he was afflicted, yet before the week was half ended, Abdullah had become so feeble that he even neglected the book which was to perpetuate his name; he remained in the corner, silent and thoughtful.

"Baba," said Hanifa, again stroking his old bald head, "Tell me your troubles — perhaps I can help you."

"I have none, child," was the holy man's prevaricating reply. A deep groan followed.

Hanifa was too solicitous of the old man's health to be silent. Long she stood over him, stroking his head, yet finally when the abundance of sighs and groans seemed to be well nigh exhausted, he explained in a feeble voice how the women of Mecca had demanded a special, impossible revelation. Concluding his explanations in utter despair, he covered his face with his hands and wept.

Hanifa laughed. "Poor Baba," she said, still stroking his bald head. "Your troubles are slight."

Abdullah raised his tear-filled eyes reproachfully.

"They are very slight," she repeated. "Leave them to me and they will disappear."

Abdullah's look of reproach turned to one of keen attention.

"Yes, Baba, if you will write my name just once in your great book, I will bring your troubles to an end."

Abdullah, with the eagerness of the sinking man who grasped at the straw, promised. While Hanifa was explaining the special revelation which on the appointed day he should communicate to the women in the mosque, the tears suddenly disappeared from his eyes. Fortified with a new hope and courage, he arose and shouted to his slaves to immediately bring a large tray of pilaf.

It was early Friday morning, earlier than usual, when Abdullah seated himself upon the platform of the mosque. On all previous occasions, since he could remember, his audiences had gathered

and were awaiting him. That Friday morning, when he said his prayers, his voice rang with an unusual clearness, and during his prostrations his old bones seemed to have renewed their youth. His face was beaming with happiness, and his eye had never been more bright, for he had an important communication from Allah to reveal to the wives of the Faithful. At his side upon the platform stood an immense copper kettle which his waiting slave had brought him. One by one the rebelling women came and squatted about, anxious to hear the special revelation promised by the beaming expression upon Abdullah's face.

Finally, when they had all congregated, Abdullah, in a voice deep with mystery and awe, commanded that each woman present should go at once to her home and immediately return with a jug of milk. The women demurred. They had come, they said, to hear the revelation. Abdullah explained that no revelation was possible until his command had been obeyed, and in a few moments two-score women, each with a jug of milk balanced upon her head, stood before him.

"Pour the milk into this kettle," said Abdullah, with a voice suggestive of still greater mystery, yet in his eye was a twinkle of delight which he could not conceal.

The women filed past the kettle, poured the milk into it, and returned to their places upon the floor before the great teacher. Abdullah, solemnly stroking his long beard, looked silently at the foaming camel's milk, and then slowly turned to the wondering women before him. His morning's discourse upon the perfect wisdom of Allah, and the wonderfulness of his revelations, was prefaced with a longer introduction than usual. Never had he been so eloquent — never had he spoken with such confidence.

"Now, O wives of the Faithful,' he said, in concluding his long discourse, "I shall impart the revelation which Allah has sent to you through me, his faithful servant. Allah bids that each of you approach this kettle of milk; he bids that each of you take from the kettle the milk which you poured into it but a moment ago. When you shall have done this, he bids that each of you who will, take four husbands, as a man may take four wives. But," he continued, as the sparkling of his eyes increased, "Allah bids me say that if one of you shall take the thousandth part of a drop of

the milk which another has poured into the kettle, it shall be accounted unto you a theft, and you shall be delivered to Iblis for eternal punishment."

The old man chuckled. The contented expressions upon the faces of the women suddenly turned to amazement.

"O great Abdullah," finally suggested an innocent one in the audience, "we do not know which our milk is — it is all alike — it is all white and foamy."

Abdullah sprang to his feet and with his arms wildly and supernaturally waving above his head, shouted with a monstrous, prophetic voice, which thundered throughout the mosque, the special revelation from Allah:

"As it is with the milk, so would it be with your children," were the few intelligible words amid the resounding echoes. "As you can not distinguish which drop of milk you poured into the kettle, so you could not distinguish the fathers of your children. Trouble me and Allah no more with your idle words."

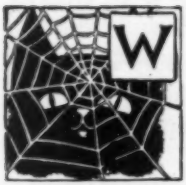
The women were vanquished; one by one they left the mosque. As the last one disappeared the chuckling Abdullah looked fondly at the white foam, smacked his lips in anticipation of many days with frequent and prolonged draughts of curdled milk, and clapped his hands to summon the waiting slave to carry the proceeds of his revelation home.

Although Hanifa could not distinguish alef from yod, that Friday afternoon she was peeking over her father's shoulder while he dilated in his great theological book upon the various sects of the Moslem world. One of them, the largest, he described as the Hanifah. As her father pointed out the word, and read it aloud, she again stroked his old, bald head, and then hurried away to bring him a bowl of curdled milk.

Abdullah's revelation must have met with Allah's favor, for the Hanifah sect has increased in numbers and in all things worldly. Prominent among its members is Abdul Hamid, the Sultan, who, with millions of others, speak reverently of the good old Saint Hanifa.

The Lace Designers.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.



HEN, some years ago, a New York lace house placed on exhibition in its windows a number of original designs in lace, they instantly attracted critical attention because of their exquisite novelty and beauty. Indeed, the metropolitan lace designers had never before seen anything that could compare with them.

"These wonderful patterns," wrote one of the critics, "seem almost a reconciliation of geometry and art, the designs partaking of the exquisite and exact forms of crystalization, while at the same time expressing the freedom of artistic fancy."

This may have seemed excessive praise to some, but the designs were indeed wonderfully fine, and their designer was besieged by interested capital and enthusiastic admirers.

He proved to be a young fellow of twenty-four, who, two years before, had been compelled to give up his trade as a lithographer and go to Arizona in hope of recovering his lost health. He smiled lightly at the outspoken praise accorded his work.

"It is nothing," he said. "I owe everything to my wife, who did the lace work after I procured the designs."

He turned to the young Spanish girl seated near, and his pallid face lit up with ardent love. The beautiful young creature returned the look. Then her eyes fell and she blushed. Unconversant with the language spoken, she yet divined that she was the subject of praise.

"If it hadn't been for my wife," continued the young fellow, "I probably would have thrown these designs away. In fact, I would never have taken up the matter seriously; but since she has worked out my patterns in thread, I see that they are a great thing, and I've already laid my plans. I propose to control the

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world's lace designs by creating the most original and beautiful patterns, and my resources in that line are, I believe, practically unlimited. But don't give me credit for being an artist. Fact is, I'm not one at all, and I don't wish to take any golden fleeces of honor by sailing under false colors. I am merely an inventor, or rather, a discoverer, and these designs, while not machine work, are not hand work. I propose, however, to keep their nature a secret, that will be passed on to my heirs, and I think," concluded the speaker, more modestly than lamely, " I have a pretty good outlook in this matter."

The designs on exhibition were withdrawn for fear they might be copied before being patented, and their inventor had just signed a contract with a syndicate of lace manufacturers to furnish designs for the syndicate at fabulous prices, when the fine enterprise was wiped out and the new art lost in a sudden, piteous tragedy.

On returning to his home one afternoon, the young designer found his wife's dead body lying across an inner threshold. At first he thought that the beautiful girl had merely fainted, but when he lifted the face he saw that life was extinct and that Repulsiveness inhabited with Death the once lovely form.

" My God," he sobbed, " I left her this morning so beautiful and happy."

He lifted her to a couch and covered up her face, and going into the street begged a passing pedestrian to come and help him.

When they had taken the body away, and before the police arrived, the young designer hurried up to the attic room of the cottage.

It was a small room, rather scantily furnished. Against the south wall was a large, glass-covered case, while beside it was a cabinet filled with bottles. In the center of the room was a table. Set up on this table were several movable stands, each formed of four slender, braced steel uprights, connected at the top by a fine wire, making a rectangle of about eight by twelve inches. The purpose of these stands seemed to be to offer a light, open framework on which lace designs could be worked out in thread. One stand was in use. An exquisite pattern, worked in filmy silk, hung upon it and trembled like a fairy thing.